**Top 11 Countries With the Biggest Gaps Between Rich and Poor**

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The U.N. Development Program recently came out with a report looking, among other things, at income inequality worldwide.

The UNDP ranked countries and regions based on a number of factors, including their Gini coefficient, named for Italian statistician Corrado Gini.

We have listed the world's most advanced economies based on their Gini score, with zero marking absolute equality and 100 absolute inequality. Scandinavian countries, Japan, and the Czech Republic have the least amount of inequality. The U.S. is among the most unequal, but it's not No. 1. To see which economy is, read on.

**No. 1 Hong Kong**

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| hongkong1.gif ED Jones/AFP/Getty Images, PHILIPPE LOPEZ/AFP/Getty Images |

**Gini score:** 43.4  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 207.2  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 2.0  
Richest 10%: 34.9  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 17.8  
  
Renowned for its high concentration of Rolls-Royces, expensive real estate, and posh shops, the Chinese special administrative region has plenty of rich who enjoy showing off their wealth. However, Hong Kong also has one of the largest public housing sectors in the world, with about half the population living in government-supported or -subsidized housing estates. The city has no minimum wage—except for domestic helpers from the Philippines, Indonesia, and other countries.

**No. 2 Singapore**

**Gini score:** 42.5  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 161.3  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 1.9  
Richest 10%: 32.8  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 17.7  
  
Singapore is one of the world's most open economies, and it suffered badly following the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers last year. Recently, though, the city-state's economy has rebounded, with GDP growing an annualized 14.9% rate in the third quarter compared with the previous quarter.

**No. 3 U.S.**

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| US1.gif Spencer Platt/Getty Images, Justin Sullivan/Getty Images |

**Gini score:** 40.8  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 13,751.4  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 1.9  
Richest 10%: 29.9  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 15.9  
  
The share of income for the top percentile of Americans was 23.5% in 2007, the highest since 1928, according to Emmanuel Saez, a Berkeley economist who won the prestigious John Bates Clark Medal in April. Income for the top 0.01% hit a record-high 6.04%. And the recession may be exacerbating income inequality.

**No. 4 Israel**

**Gini score:** 39.2  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 164.0  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 2.1  
Richest 10%: 28.8  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 13.4  
  
Gone are the days when Israel was one of the world's most egalitarian societies. Early Labor Zionist pioneers built kibbutzim for Jewish immigrants, but those collectives have fallen on hard times. The growing number of *haredim*, or ultra-Orthodox Jews, with large families and men who study the Torah rather than work has worsened the inequality problem.

**No. 5 Portugal**

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**Gini score:** 38.5  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 222.8  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 2.0  
Richest 10%: 29.8  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 15.0  
  
While Portugal emerged from recession in the second quarter, the unemployment rate tops 9%. The ruling Socialists retained power in elections last month but lost seats to parties on the far left.

**No. 6 New Zealand**

**Gini score:** 36.2  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 135.7  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 2.2  
Richest 10%: 27.8  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 12.5  
  
According to the OECD, New Zealand had the biggest rise in inequality among member nations in the two decades starting in the mid-1980s. The country's economy emerged from recession in the second quarter, but with growth of just 0.1%, the central bank is likely to keep interest rates low until well into 2010.

**No. 7 (tie) Italy**

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| Italy1.gif Vittorio Zunino Celotto/Getty Images, GERARD JULIEN/AFP/Getty Images |

**Gini score:** 36.0  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 2,101.6  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 2.3  
Richest 10%: 26.8  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 11.6  
  
Italians are focused now on the melodrama surrounding embattled Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. The political crisis comes at a time when the economy is still mired in recession even as countries like Germany and France are growing again.

**No. 7 (tie) Britain**

**Gini score:** 36.0  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 2,772.0  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 2.1  
Richest 10%: 28.5  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 13.8  
  
According to Britain's Institute of Fiscal Studies, a government-funded think tank, the average national income, adjusted for inflation, grew 0.5% between 2004 and 2008. In contrast, the same figure for the top 90% income bracket jumped 1.2% over the same period. That was predominantly driven by large salaries and bonuses from the financial services sector in the pre-credit crunch era.

**No. 9 Australia**

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| australia1.gif GREG WOOD/AFP/Getty Images, Scott Barbour/Getty Images |

**Gini score:** 35.2  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 821.0  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 2.0  
Richest 10%: 25.4  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 12.5  
  
While developed economies elsewhere fell into recession, the Lucky Country's good fortune held out, with Australia continuing to grow thanks in part to strong demand from China for its resources. This month the central bank raised interest rates, making Australia a leader among countries moving away from monetary easing.

**No. 10 (tie) Ireland**

**Gini score:** 34.3  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 259.0  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 2.9  
Richest 10%: 27.2  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 9.4  
  
Put aside the old comparisons to Asia's tiger economies. Ireland's workers are suffering badly from the recession; the unemployment rate soared in August to 12.5%. That's the second-worst in the EU, behind only Spain.

**No. 10 (tie) Greece**

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| Greece1.gif getty images, ROBERT ATANASOVSKI/AFP/Getty Images |

**Gini score:** 34.3  
**GDP 2007 (US$ billions):** 313.4  
**Share of income or expenditure (%)**  
Poorest 10%: 2.5  
Richest 10%: 26.0  
**Ratio of income or expenditure, share of top 10% to lowest 10%:** 10.2  
  
Newly elected Prime Minister George Papandreou's government faces potential disciplinary action from the European Union, which has reprimanded Greece for a budget deficit of 6% of